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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 BARCELONA 000012

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

STATE FOR EUR/WE (PSPRATLEN/ESAMSON) AND CA/OCS/EUR FOR PBPLATUKIS

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [ASEC](#) [CASC](#) [PGOV](#) [SP](#)

SUBJECT: USS MT. WHITNEY: CITY AUTHORITIES, POLICE RUN FOR COVER  
FOLLOWING INCIDENT WITH CREWMEN

REF: BARCELONA 0009, MADRID 0113

1. (SBU) SUMMARY: CG met with a city council member and Director of the Guardia Urbana to express USG disappointment with police actions January 22 towards crewmen aboard the USS Mt. Whitney. CG told Barcelona authorities that quick communication either directly with the Commanding Officer of the ship or the Consul General might have kept the situation from spiraling out of control and causing subsequent reactions in Barcelona, Madrid, Naples, and Washington, DC. City officials acknowledged that miscommunication during the police action, as well as, lack of communication afterwards, was likely the root of the problem. They insisted that U.S. military vessels are welcome in Barcelona, and undertook to contact Sixth Fleet officials in Naples as well as liaison officers at the base in Rota to clarify the situation. End Summary.

#### LACK OF COMMUNICATION

2. (SBU) Following the January 22 incident between undercover Guardia Urbana agents and crewmen from the visiting USS Mt. Whitney (ref a), and in the face of an almost complete lack of communication from city authorities, CG sent a letter to Guardia Urbana director F. Xavier Vilario i Camps, and copies to the Mayor's office and the office of the regional President Jose Montilla denouncing the incident. CG later spoke directly with an aide to the Mayor and the Diplomatic Advisor to President Montilla. In addition, we have been in contact with the Court and a representative of the office of Civil and Human Rights. Embassy Madrid ODC Chief, the President of the U.S. Section of the Joint Permanent Committee that manages our bilateral Agreement on Defense Cooperation, raised the incident with his Spanish flag-officer counterpart January 23. Embassy Madrid sent a note verbal January 28 to the MFA denouncing the incident and seeking an explanation. The Charge d'Affaires raised the incident January 29 in a meeting with the MOD Secretary General for Policy (ref b).

3. (SBU) After all of this, the only response we received from city authorities was a note from Vilario, which stated that the matter was under internal investigation and that he was sorry for any "inconvenience" the incident may have caused. The CG requested and received a meeting with the appropriate authorities.

#### RUNNING FOR COVER

4. (SBU) CG met with city council woman Assumpta Escarp i Gibert February 4 to follow up our previous communications. Guardia Urbana director Vilario and his deputy also attended. CG told city officials that he appreciated the generally excellent relationship and cooperation with the police in Barcelona, and that this was particularly important as the protection of American citizens is our highest priority. He noted that to date we had not had a problem like this, and further reminded the officials that in his almost three years here he had

received numerous appeals for more ship visits. CG expressed USG disappointment regarding this incident. As a result: A) The Sixth Fleet was now reluctant to return to Barcelona; B) the incident had received attention at the highest levels in the Department; C) the USG sent a diplomatic note to the GOS; and D) witness testimony that only African-American males were targeted left a clear impression that race played a part in the event. CG told the officials that the situation required an explanation and clarification. The USG also wanted assurances that U.S. military vessels would continue to be welcome to the city.

¶15. (SBU) Escarp assured CG that U.S. military vessels were, indeed, welcome in Barcelona. She insisted that this was an isolated matter and noted that this is the first time in years that she has heard of something like this happening. She acknowledged CG's letter and made it clear her office had been contacted by other Spanish authorities. Escarp and Vilaro agreed that miscommunication, both during the operation and after, was the likely cause of the problem. CG noted that the plainclothes agents failed to identify themselves as police.

#### NEXT STEPS

¶16. (SBU) CG suggested a number of steps city officials might take to move past and learn from this incident. First, city officials need to offer an explanation to the USG and make clear what they are investigating. Second, police officials should be directly in contact with NCIS liaison officers at Rota. Third, that Guardia Urbana have a direct line of communication with CG Barcelona consular personnel. Escarp and Vilaro agreed, and also offered to give both Rota and Sixth Fleet officials information on the different types of police identification to enhance our security briefings.

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¶17. (SBU) Comment: Police and city officials were clearly shaken upon hearing both how far accounts of this incident had spread and a full outline of the consequences. We believe they are sincere in wanting to work out better lines of communication internally and with the USG, and we plan to hold them to that. The next steps we suggested should go a long way towards strengthening a frayed relationship. We are going to insist on a copy of the investigation report and continue following on-going judicial procedures stemming from the formal complaints lodged by the crewmen. End Comment.  
ROBINSON